

SWT Executive - 16 March 2022

Present: Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts (Chair)
Councillors Chris Booth, Dixie Darch, Caroline Ellis, Ross Henley, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith and Andrew Sully

Officers: James Barrah, Chris Hall, Alison North, Paul Fitzgerald, Clare Rendell, Tony Bryant, Sarah Povall, Kerry Prisco, Nicky Rendell, Malcolm Riches, Richard Sealy and Sue Tomlinson

Also Present: Councillors Marcus Kravis, Libby Lisgo, Janet Lloyd, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Brenda Weston, Loretta Whetlor and Gwil Wren

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

89. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors M Kravis and D Perry.

90. Declarations of Interest

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Councillor or Clerk of a County, Town or Parish Council or any other Local Authority:-

Name	Minute No.	Description of Interest	Reason	Action Taken
Cllr C Booth	All Items	Wellington and Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Ellis	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Lisgo	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
Cllr J Lloyd	All Items	Wellington & Sampford Arundel	Personal	Spoke
Cllr M Rigby	All Items	SCC & Bishops Lydeard	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith-Roberts	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr V Stock-Williams	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke
Cllr B Weston	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
Cllr L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke
Cllr G Wren	All Items	Clerk to	Personal	Spoke

91. **Public Participation**

No members of the public had requested to speak on any item on the agenda.

92. **Executive Forward Plan**

(Copy of the Executive Forward Plan, circulated with the agenda).

Councillors were reminded that if they had an item they wanted to add to the agenda, that they should send their requests to the Governance Team.

Resolved that the Executive Forward Plan be noted.

93. **Annual Pay Policy Statement 2022/23**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors queried how Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) rates of pay compared to other Councils.
The HR Manager advised that research had been carried out to compare the rates and that SWT were slightly lower which was similar to Somerset County Council (SCC).
- Councillors were proud that SWT paid the living wage and that the Council paid officers well for the area.
- Councillors were pleased that the living wage had been adopted as the minimum wage for SWT, but they wanted to ensure that the living wage was put forward to the New Council for adoption.
The HR Manager advised that SCC was not at the same level due to different staffing sectors covered by the Council, but that they were looking at improving this going forward.
- Councillors asked whether market sector was applied to entice officers to certain roles.
The HR Manager advised that SWT used that process when they struggled to fill a post.

Resolved that the Executive recommended that the Pay Policy statement 2022/23 was approved by Full Council.

94. **Corporate Performance Report, Quarter 3 2021/22**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors queried why there had been an increase in complaints received and whether it was due to Covid?
The Assistant Director for Customer advised that it was most likely linked to Covid and now services were reopening, that it was driving demand, but that they were carrying out work to improve the figures.
- Councillors praised the work carried out on emergency repairs.

- Councillors highlighted that officers were working hard to improve the results on the red indicators.

Resolved that the Executive noted the Council's performance report for quarter 3.

95. **2021/22 General Fund Financial Monitoring as at Quarter 3 (31 December 2021)**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors queried the figures on page 34 of the agenda and the overspend due to the correction of out of hours payments for officers.
The Section 151 Officer would provide a written answer.
- Councillors requested that the comments made at Community Scrutiny on the lack of parking information were made out of frustration.
The Portfolio Holder for Parking and Transportation advised that the review on the parking strategy would be produced soon and would be brought to the Community Scrutiny Committee for feedback.
- Councillors were aware of the many impacts on the budget but were positive about the current position.

Resolved that the Executive noted the Council's forecast financial performance and projected reserves position for 2021/22 financial year as at 31 December 2021.

96. **2021/22 Housing Revenue Account Financial Monitoring as at Quarter 3 (31 December 2021)**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors agreed it was a difficult time for residents and that SWT needed to ensure the residents were supported especially with the future increases in energy bills.
- Councillors highlighted that there was a slight overspend but understood that it was due to the current difficulties within the construction industry.
- Councillors were proud of the housing service provided by SWT.

Resolved that the Executive noted the HRA's forecast financial performance and projected reserves position for 2021/22 financial year as at 31 December 2022.

97. **Budget Approval - Electric Vehicle Charging Points**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors queried whether SWT gave advice on how to buy an electric vehicle.
The Portfolio Holder for Climate Change advised that SWT was not able to give advice on the purchase of electric vehicles as it was too complex, but there were groups out in the community where residents could gain the information.

- Councillors were happy to support the report and were pleased to see an increase in the use of the charging points.

Resolved that the Executive recommended to Full Council the supplementary capital budget allocation of £120k, making a total of £270k of which £136k was secured funding from OZEV.

98. **Capital, Investment and Treasury Strategies 2022/23 to 2024/25**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors queried that the Strategy seemed to focus on short-term borrowing and whether SWT should be looking at more longer-term schemes.
The Section 151 Officer stated that officers took advice from Arlingclose on borrowing and that they knew work would need to be done on what future borrowing looked like within the New Council.
- Councillors queried whether SCC had a Capital, Investment and Treasury Strategy, as it would mean the consolidation of the District investments if they didn't.
- Councillors were pleased with the Strategy.

Resolved that the Executive recommended to Full Council to approve the CIT Strategies and MRP Statement for adoption with effect from 1 April 2022.

99. **Wellington and Cullompton Railway Station Project - Approval of Revised Project Governance Arrangements**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors queried why the report was not going to Full Council.
The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation advised that the report was for the governance arrangements only, so therefore was an Executive decision.
- Councillors advised that Wellington Town Council were pleased to support the project.
The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation thanked them for their support.
- Councillors agreed it was an exciting project and would make a big difference to the area.

Resolved that the Executive endorsed the governance arrangements set out in Appendix A.

100. **Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Flats Regeneration, Taunton**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors queried when the demolishing works would start?
The Assistant Director for Development and Regeneration advised that they needed to decant the flats first and that the shop was still under

lease. They hoped to be able to decant all the properties by April 2023 and then look to start works.

- Councillors thanked the Portfolio Holder for Housing for her cooperation in the comments made at Community Scrutiny Committee.
- Concern was raised that the future change in council would impact on the work.
- Councillors believed that the work on the decant of residents would have benefited from the experience of the North Taunton Woolaway Project.
- The Portfolio Holder for Housing advised she was keen to retain the land for housing developments but understood that it might need to be kept fallow for a period of time to attract subsidies and funding in the future.
- The Portfolio Holder for Housing thanked all for their comments.

Resolved that the Executive recommended to Full Council the following:-

- a) To approve the decanting of tenants from Wordsworth Drive Flats with the awarding of gold band status in April 2022. Gold band status would support tenants secure alternative suitable accommodation.
- b) To approve the decanting of tenants from Coleridge Crescent Flats with the awarding of gold band status at a time to be determined by the Director of Housing and Communities in conjunction with the portfolio holder for Housing.
- c) To approve the purchase through mutual consent one leasehold property at Wordsworth Drive flats and compensate the owner in line with statutory compensation requirements.
- d) To make available to the leaseholder the opportunity of a SWT Equity Loan to help secure alternative private accommodation.
- e) To note officers would agree the closure date and compensation with the shop leasee to ensure Wordsworth block was available for demolition.
- f) To approve the demolition of Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Flats at a time to be determined by the Director of Housing and Communities in conjunction with the portfolio holder for Housing.
- g) Officers to return to the Council with options for the future use of the site.
- h) To approve a supplementary budget of £1,111,700 and to delegate the funding of the scheme to the Section 151 Officer.

(The Meeting ended at 7.30 pm)